

The Lord's Supper

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The Communion of Saints; Not the Communion of Sect

By A. D. Williams, D. D.

Free Communion is the most characteristic of dogmatic doctrines of the General, Freewill and other liberal Baptists. Concerning the mode of baptism we are in accord with the other Baptists; and, in fighting their own battles on this point, they just as effectually fight ours also. Concerning Free Will and Free Salvation, we agree heartily with the Methodists and many others, and their successful proclamation of "Whosoever will" is equal armor for ourselves.

But on the question of Free Communion we stand alone. The close Baptists fight us, and not infrequently charge us with being neither logical nor "baptistic," whereas they themselves are the guilty ones, and taunt us with being unable to defend our position, and afraid to attempt it—neither of which is true. The pedobaptists are practically free communionists, but they mostly do it on grounds we cannot accept, involving as they do the Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Hence we need, not simply to defend ourselves, but to vigorously push the battle into the enemy's camp, as we easily can do. Close communion is the offspring, neither of the Bible nor of logic, but of arrogant and bigoted assumption. Let our brethren therefore give prominence to this subject, and be prepared to give an effective reason for the blessed Free Communion faith that is in them. In this way we will do much to lengthen our cords and strengthen our stakes. Scatter this little work everywhere. It will inform the ignorant.

Though it has been before the public for many years, and three editions have been sold, it has never been answered, nor has any serious attempt been made to answer it.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

CHAPTER I—THE BIBLE STATEMENT.

Mementoes, memorials, things that revive sacred memories, are among the most treasured things of all peoples. The little lock of hair from the dead baby— how the heart beats and the eye moistens at the sight of it!

The Great Master had been with his disciples for three most eventful years. He had spoken as never man spake. He had uttered such words of wisdom as the ages had in vain waited to hear—words of thrilling import, words of divinest tenderness and love. He had attached them to Him by an attraction that silently overmastered all the other attractions of earth. Broken for the moment at The Trial, it grew at last into the sacrifice of an unselfish martyrdom.

But, alas, human flesh is weak! The strongest and holiest affections weary amid the dust and din of life's battle. We are prone to sleep—the disciples did so— amid the most momentous experiences of earth. We need reminders. The casket needs oftentimes to be opened for a new gaze upon the old memento. The fire on the most sacred altar needs frequently to be rekindled.

The Master knew all this better than human tongue can tell. He knew how we forgot. He knew how the soul's fibers need also to be replenished as well as the body's. And so on that eventful night:

"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples saying: This is my body which is given for you. Take, eat; this do in remembrance of me Likewise also he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, He gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sin; and they all drank of it"—Matthew, Mark and Luke combined.

Thus does the Master most wisely arrange to keep alive within his disciples a lively remembrance of His Sacrifice for them.

Paul throws further light on the matter in 1 Cor. 11:20-34. The Corinthians had perverted the ordinance from a memorial service to a feast—from the "Lord's Supper" to the ancient feasting of the "Agapae," where one satisfied his hunger and another his drunken thirst. So the apostle says:

"When ye come together, this (that ye do) is not the Lord's Supper. For everyone taketh his Supper, (a meal) and one is hungry and another is drunken. What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise (disgrace) ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise ye not."

In consequence of this shameful perversion of the "Lord's Supper," followed by the rebuke of the apostle, the ancient Agapae feast was eventually abandoned. The apostle goes on to instruct them more perfectly in the way of the Lord, as follows:

"For I have received of the Lord, that which also I have delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night that he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; for this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood, this do ye, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of me. For, as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, But let a man examine

himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink .of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself not discerning the Lord's body. For, if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when we come together to eat, tarry one for another. And, if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye may not come together unto condemnation."

These passages show four things:

1. The object of this ordinance. It is a Memorial Service—to remember Christ, to discern the Lord's body, and to show forth His death till He come—that is, to be continued till He come. These three statements comprehend two things, and two things only— one esoteric, or inward, the other exoteric, or outward —the one that we have a spiritual experience that discerns the Lord's body as broken for us, so that we can remember him as our Redeemer and Savior; the other that we thus figure or show forth the Lord's death outwardly to the world, as the only hope of lost men.

2. Who shall engage in this service? Plainly those who can "discern" the Lord's body, as broken for them personally—who can thus remember Him as their Lord and Master—and are thus prepared and qualified to "show forth" to the world His death for the world's redemption.

That none but Christians can do this, even though they may be church members, is too evident to need proof. That all Christians, of whatever grade of intelligence, in understanding God's Word, or however affected by prejudice or influence, or however shortcoming as to some of the obligations of the gospel—and who can say he is complete in this? —if so be that the Master overlooks them so far as to recognize them as his children—would seem equally evident. We do not see how this can be controverted. If a Christian recognized and accepted of Christ as such, cannot "remember" Him, cannot discern the Lord's body, cannot properly show forth the Lord's death, who can? Can the sinner?

. We emphasize this point. Any child of God, every child of God. utterly irrespective of differences of belief or of practice on baptism, or anything else, it so be that he is still really an accepted child of God, can meet all the conditions the Lord has made to the Lord's Supper—that one "discern the Lord's body," can "remember" him, and can rightfully "show forth his death." Any other conditions are man made conditions, utterly without warrant from the Great Master; and, be who can meet the Lord's conditions should come to the Lord's Supper.

3. Who shall examine the candidate and decide the question of fitness? "Let a man examine himself." There is no external tribunal. There is no outside authority, that may say, "Thou shalt not eat!" A man may examine himself; and if he decides that in himself there is a discerning of the Lord's body, he may eat, and there is none that may lawfully say him "Nay!" Not only may he do this, but all others are positively enjoined—"Let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Whosoever, therefore, either in word or doctrine, or denominational usage, forbids him does it in direct contradiction of the Master's injunction "Let him." This, of course, implies honesty on the part of the candidate. Imposition, if manifest, is to be dealt with precisely as any other imposition of similar character.

It is just as easy for us to keep away those not recognized as Christians as for close Baptists to keep away those not recognized as close Baptists.

4. If any unworthy person eats, he brings condemnation only on himself—for "he that eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself"—not to the church nor to his fellows, but to "himself" alone.

And this is emphasized by the sacred narrative in the record of the presence at the first "Supper" of Judas himself. All of the three evangelists who mention the Sapper specially mention the presence of Judas at its beginning—Matt. 26:22-25, Mark 14:20 and Luke 22:14. These passages make it incontestable that Judas was present at and during the celebration of the Passover, immediately before the Supper, and we are not aware that any one questions it. But Luke, in the next verse, the 21st, after describing the Supper, says: "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table!"—proving incontestably that Judas was there at the close of the Supper, as well as at the beginning, making his continuance there during the Supper a virtual certainty. The participation of the arch traitor brought no reproach to the other apostles nor to the Great Master, because he who eateth unworthily bringeth condemnation only to himself.

Here we might leave the subject where the sacred narrative leaves it. But, unfortunately, in the complications of doctrine and of usage that have arisen, the Supper has been mixed up with matters with which the Bible does not connect it, and standards have been set up, for which confessedly there is no "Thus saith the Lord." That this has been done conscientiously there is no reasonable question. That it has been done at the demands of a supposed principle, is also undoubtedly true—and we honor the fidelity to supposed principle, even when constrained to declare that there is no such principle involved.

We are sorry for differences between any Christians. And so, without our needing to say another word, they themselves most incontinently desert their own famous syllogism. It isn't baptism after all, nor at all. If that were it, then, obviously, all the General Baptists, the Freewill Baptists, and all free - communion Baptists, could march directly into the Baptist citadel and be entirely at home there. But their close communion bars are interposed just as much against all of us as against unimmersed believers.

At this juncture, we ask the close communion Baptist to choose his horn of the dilemma. If he sticks to his syllogism, his close communion is gone, as to all "immersed believers" in other denominations. If he gives up his syllogism, to save his close communion as to these "immersed believers,"—as in the pinch he always does—then what need that we put forth any effort to overthrow it? And this syllogism, that they will not themselves stick to, is a fair example of the affected confidence of close communionists and the illogical inconsequence of their so called arguments.

2. The "Church" Syllogism.

At this point, the close-communion Baptist asks leave to amend and reconstruct his syllogism. To make it of any logical significance, he has to reconstruct it as follows:

1. There is no true Christian church but the close communion Baptist church.

2. Communion is a church ordinance.

3. Therefore there is no proper communion except inside a close communion Baptist church.

There is no other way of logically excluding all other Christian people from the communion—all except of "their own faith and order," as they actually do. And yet many of them do not like to accept and maintain the logic of their own position. They thus see that it degrades the Communion from the Bible "Communion of Saints" to the narrow and bigoted basis of the communion of a sect. The rank and file do not generally like to do this. But, when driven to plain, inevitable, logical consequences, the leaders do it, though with evident reluctance—all except the "Landmarkers," who accept and maintain it without flinching.

The Advance recently alluded to this claim of a "Right to Unchurch the Rest," whereupon the Standard, the Chicago close Baptist organ, of August 23, 1888, squarely admits and says, "Strict communion denies churchhood to all Christian societies except the Baptists." There you have it, in unmistakable language, "All other Christian" bodies are not possessed of "churchhood" and are merely "societies" Supplying the omitted but implied middle premise, that "communion is a church ordinance," you have the syllogism completed, viz; (1) There is no church but a close Baptist church; (2) Communion is a church ordinance; (3) Therefore, there is no communion except inside a close Baptist church. It is true the Standard touches the matter gingerly, as they all do. They hesitate to acknowledge so bald a bigotry by a plain and direct statement of it. But their logic demands it. It is the necessary and fundamental basis of close communion. If the churches of other denominations are Christian churches, then, incontestably, they are as justly and fully entitled to the communion as are close Baptist churches, and it can logically be denied them only on the ground that they are not Christian churches.

Close communion, therefore, unchurches all other Christian people. In its logic, its first and fundamental premise is— There is no Christian church but a close Baptist church. All the rest are only "societies." In this argument, baptism drops into the background. "To be sure," it says to General and other free communion Baptists, "you have been baptized all right—you are baptists—no trouble at all on that score—but—but—you don't belong to 'our faith and order'—to our church, which is the only church, therefore we can't commune with you!"—and, of course, all other denominations come under the same ban for the same reason. With baptism, the same as without baptism, the significant, fundamental premise and reason is because "The close Baptist church is the only church, and you don't belong to it." To free communion Baptists it says: "You are all right, except that you do not belong to the church—our close communion Baptist church."

We cannot accept this narrow, unfraternal dogma. In all that goes to manifest converted hearts and organized effective Christian work and workers, these other denominations are fully the peers of the close Baptists. In all that evidences clear and close fellowship and acceptance with the Master, the close Baptists have no advantage whatever. He blesses and prospers the others quite as abundantly and gloriously as He does the close Baptists. There are no practical evidences what ever that He disowns them, either as Christians or as Christian churches. In the divine attitude toward them there is no indication whatever of such a wide difference as that the one are His churches and the others are not. But the close communion Baptists insist, "They have substituted a human ceremony for a divine ordinance!" So we also believe. But the close Baptists have done the same thing—they have substituted the human ceremony of the communion of a sect for the divine ordinance of the Communion of Saints—have substituted their own narrow close communion for the Bible Communion of all God's children at their common Father's table. We believe in neither. We can accept neither. We utterly reject them both.

Besides, the close Baptists have substituted another human scheme for the divine teachings that is quite as bad as pedobaptism. They substitute the Augustinian dogma of fatalism, which Augustine borrowed from the philosophy of the Stoics, as revamped by Calvin, for the Bible doctrine of Free Will—that whosoever will may take of the water of life freely. This human philosophy practically teaches, that while God calls ob all men to repent, he is really playing make-believe with many of them and deceiving them, withholding the "gracious ability" to repent and believe from the non-elect, so that they in fact can not believe and repent or do otherwise than they do, and then, damns them to all eternity for not doing what they could not do.

It is true that many, if not most of the rank and file of the close Baptist denomination do not believe this God-dishonoring and man-debasing doctrine, making men moral machines and God a moral tyrant. But their standard authors and theological professors do believe and teach it. Even so clear and strong a man as Wayland says: All have sinned; God is under no obligation to save any; if, of his inscrutable mercy, he sees fit to save a part, no one can complain—forgetting the obvious moral necessity, that, if he sees fit to save some without conditions, he is thereby, as an infinitely good and impartial Being, put under obligation to save all in the same way—else his goodness and impartiality are utterly and forever forfeited.

But notwithstanding this—in spite of pedobaptism on the one hand and of close communion and Calvinism on the other, we gladly recognize both as parts not only of the church universal, bat also of the organic, earthly church militant. We unchurch neither. Each is a part, but a part only, of the great church of Christ. As such, the communion belongs alike to each and to all, and to deny intercommunion between and among them is to assume what is contrary to Christian love and fraternity, as well as to the equal rights of Brethren, and without warrant from the Master.

As to the Communion being a church ordinance, that depends on what you mean by "Church." If you mean one, individual church, it belongs to it no more than to each and every other such individual, local church, and does not belong to any one, as such. In fact it belongs to each and all alike; so that no one can say, "It is mine?" to the exclusion of any other or, an individual member of any other. God has given no exclusive communion privileges to any portion of his church. It is not a Baptist table, nor a Methodist table, nor a Presbyterian table, nor any other denomination's table, but "The Lord's Table." If by church you mean the aggregate of all God's church, or churches, on the earth, then no harm comes from the language, but it gives no support to exclusive or close communion. In any case it is non-Biblical, and

better not be used at all.

3. The Fellowship Argument.

The assumption that we "fellowship" the errors of those we commune with has long been one of the principal stocks in trade of the close communion Baptists, especially as against free communion Baptists. "Yes," they have said, "you are Baptists, but you fellowship pedobaptists by communing with them, and so we can not fellowship you by communing with you!" Obviously, the assumption is that by communing with one we become responsible for his errors.

Of late, however, there has been a little yielding on this point; so that an inquirer in the Examiner, August 23, 1888, asks: "Is it (communion) not a commemorative and not a fellowship ordinance?" and the editor answers; "Passages like Luke 22:19, and 1 Cor. 11:26, show clearly that the main significance of the supper is commemorative." "Fellowship ordinance" has to take a back seat. It is getting too threadbare and gauzy to serve longer in the foreground. But the Examiner does not yet quite give it up. That would be too great a concession all at once, however creditable it might be to its logic and good sense. It adds: "But other passages, especially 1 Cor. 10:16, 18, show that it also symbolizes the union of Christians with Christ, and so with each other." Well! . If this is all the "fellowship" there is in it—"the union of Christians (not close Baptists) with Christ and so with each other"—it is good free-communion doctrine, unless it be assumed that only close Baptists are "Christians."

Without perhaps intending it, this really yields the whole point. This would simply fellowship them as "Christians;" and free-communion Baptists, believing that none but "Christians," whether church-members or not, should come to the Communion, and that all Christians should, would not seriously object to it. So far, therefore, as The Examiner is concerned, all is conceded that militates in the least against our free communion. And, it is but fair to say that many others also give up the "fellowship" argument.

But others do not. They still cling to it, and sometimes with a great deal of tenacity. They still insist that to commune with a pedobaptist is to fellowship his pedobaptism, and to commune with a free-communion Baptist is to fellowship at second hand, the pedobaptism of the pedobaptist he communes with.

Obviously, if this is the case, it communing with one makes us to fellowship and be responsible for one of his errors, then it will make us, in like manner, fellowship and be responsible for any other error he may hold to; and this would make us responsible for all the errors of all with whom we commune. If this is true, communion would pile upon us responsibility for a mountain of errors, under which no soul could stand, and it would not be safe to commune with any one, as we would thereby add his errors and sins to our own.

The absurdity of this argument is so manifest, that it is only a wonder that any sensible person ever believed it; and it is no wonder that The Examines and others are giving it up, and winking it out of sight. Let it depart in peace. It never had substance enough to make a respectable ghost—dearly as it used to be cherished by the close communionists.

4. The Inference Argument.

Confessedly, there is no "Thus saith the Lord" for close communion. If there was, that would settle the matter. But there is none. No such authority is found in the Bible. Close Baptists rightfully insist that sprinkling and infant baptism shall not be accepted on the strength of "inference," They demand a "Thus saith the Lord;" and, because no such can be produced, they very properly reject them. But with the strangest and grossest inconsistency, close-communion, Baptists turn right about and adopt restricted communion on inference alone, just as utterly unable to furnish a "Thus saith the Lord" for their close communion as; the pedobaptists are for their sprinkling and infant baptism. If these may not be accepted on the strength of "inference," neither should close communion. Free-communion Baptists are therefore both more consistent and more "baptistic" in refusing to accept an unfraternal usage on the strength of simply an "inference"—especially when there are more and better inferences against it.

We say therefore to close-communion Baptists, throw away your unbaptistic, pedobaptist "inferences," and take scripture as meaning only what, and just what it says. That is what you say to pedobaptists, and that is what we repeat to you from your own lips. Cease teaching for doctrines the inferences of men, and assume only what you can find a plain, unequivocal divine command for, and you will be surprised to find you have no authority for driving away any of the Lord's children from the Lord's table, and eventually relieved to perceive there is no need of carrying longer the unfraternal and bigoted assumption of close communion.

Here, then, an issue is joined. When they find a "Thus saith the Lord," for close communion, we go over to them. Until they do, they must come over to us, or stand convicted of teaching for doctrines that which God has not commanded—that is, the doctrines of men.

In this connection, as so many, in spite of its logical inconsequences, still cling to the dogma that "baptism is pre-requisite to communion" let us look farther at it. First, it rests only on an inference from an inference, with no Bible authority for either. It first infers that all primitive disciples who came to the communion had been baptized, and then inters from that inference that baptism is pro-requisite to communion. "But," exclaims the close communionist, almost with horror, "you are a baptist, and don't you believe the apostles were all baptized before the communion?" We answer, probably! But there is absolutely no proof of it. The Bible, nor secular history, nowhere says so. It rests solely on an inference.

But, it is inconceivable, if this point is of so much importance as our close communion brethren insist, that it should have been left to any mere inference whatever. In their estimation, the point is fundamental—so fundamental as to justify and demand a line of separation and division to run clear through the body of Christ. Six words—"No unbaptized persons shall eat thereof," as was said of the Passover, "No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof,"—would have settled it. But those six words are not given, nor any others equivalent to them. The Bible is utterly silent on the point. Evidently the more natural and reasonable inference is that the point had no such importance in the mind of the Master as it has in the minds of close communion Baptists. He saw nothing fundamental here, or he would have settled the matter with his word. If it was as necessary to keep the unbaptized away from the Communion, as it was to keep the uncircumcised away from the Passover, he would have said so. They are not only wise above what is written, but wise above the

Master. He didn't think it necessary to hedge this matter about. They do. And herein is a contrast.

But, if the first inference is conceded without proof, the second does not follow from it. Because one thing precedes another at some given time, it is a monstrous leap of logic to infer that it must always do so. No such inference is legitimate. On the other hand, it is illegitimate. To make it legitimate there must be some positive requirement of law—as in this case we have seen there is not—or some necessary sequence in the nature of the things involved. As to the nature of communion and baptism, communion shows forth the sufferings and death of Christ, and baptism symbolizes His burial and resurrection. Were there, therefore, anything in the nature of the two ordinances requiring one to precede the other, since death precedes burial and resurrection, it would be that communion must precede baptism.

As a matter of fact, the Bible nowhere connects these two ordinances in any such commanded or necessary order of sequence that either one must certainly follow the other. Whatever sequence occurs in any given case is simply accidental and circumstantial—the result of circumstances instead of the operation of any principle. We repeat, that if any principle had been involved, the Master would not have left the matter to the uncertain and unsatisfactory conclusion of an inference from an inference—where the first inference is totally unproved and unprovable, and the second a manifest non sequitur, with a stronger inference against it. We turn the tables on the close communion Baptists, who insist that they will not receive infant baptism on the strength of an inference, in the absence of a "Thus saith the Lord," and declare our unwillingness to accept this proposition on the strength of a diluted inference from an inference—and further insist that in this we are more baptistic than they. They deny concerning communion the argument on which they confidently rely concerning baptism,

5. The "Disorderly Walker" argument.

Then it is said that church discipline, and the proper withdrawing from disorderly walkers, cannot be maintained without close communion. This is an exceedingly small man of straw, of exclusive close communion make. We find no difficulty in that direction.

When one of our members living a godly life changes his opinions; we do not throw dirt after him, but give him a letter to join a church he likes better, and when he comes back to visit us we are glad to meet him at our common father's table. When one of our members falls from grace and we think he has ceased to be a Christian, we turn him out, and never invite him again to the communion, unless he gets reconverted, so to speak, when we take him back, and then of course invite him to the table. There is, therefore, no trouble in our maintaining discipline and withdrawing from disorderly walkers. Free communionists do not find the least use for close communion as a church maul—no, thank you!

The whole force of this argument rests upon the unfraternal and bigoted assumption that all Christians not members of a close -Baptist church are "disorderly walkers." Let them recognize other denominations as Christians and Christian churches, and cease refusing to give letters to those of their good members who wish to join some other evangelical church, and not exclude them as though they were children of the devil, and they too would have no further use for this argument. One of the worst evils among Christians is this pharisaical disposition to throw unfraternal epithets and ecclesiastical clubs at those who chance to differ from them on points not involving personal Christian character. And there are few things that promote this disposition more than close communion. When close communion dies—as some day it will—we shall be nearer the spirit of heaven than we are now.

6. The "Divine Order" argument.

One of the most common, and most confidently asserted, close communion arguments is that a "Divine order of Christian duties as taught in the Great Commission, and in Acts 2:41, 42. "Free communion," they exultantly say, "violates the Divine order: it stands in direct opposition to God's word"—appealing for proof to the above passages. Let us see, The Great Commission, Matt. 28:19, 20, says—"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It is properly assumed that the Communion is among the "all things whatsoever," and then, because the "all things whatsoever" is named after the "baptizing," it is improperly assumed that baptism must be "a prerequisite to communion."

But, prayer, profession, repentance, faith, conversion, and even baptism itself, are also and equally among the "all things whatsoever" that Christ has commanded. Of this there can be no question. And so, if the argument is good for anything, it equally proves that baptism is "a prerequisite" to all these, as well as to the communion. Of this, also, there can be no question. It is as plain and conclusive as anything can be. Yet, the close communionists will not accept the inevitable logic of their own argument. Like other evangelical Christians, they believe that all these—prayer, profession, repentance, faith, conversion—should all come before, and not after, baptism—and that baptism cannot precede itself.

Acts 2:41-42, reads—"They that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Verse 46 shows that this "breaking of bread" was "daily" and "from house to house" where "they did eat their meat (Gr. trophes, food, nourishment, sustenance) with gladness and singleness of heart," and so was not the communion at all, but an exhibition of the "all things in common" that for a time prevailed among the first Christians, and somewhat like that which temporarily prevails among us at associations and other gatherings

But, granting that the communion was meant, if the passage proves a divine or necessary "order," then "prayers" cannot come until after both baptism and the Lord's supper—which even close communion Baptists do not believe—since "prayers" are not mentioned until after the "breaking of bread."

So, then, this "Divine Order" argument, if it were good for anything, would out Campbell the Campbellites, in that it would require baptism, not only before conversion, but before belief, repentance, faith, profession, prayers, and all the other "all things whatsoever" that Christ has "commanded," including baptism itself. It is safe to say that a weaker argument could not well be made. It is so manifestly inconclusive and fallacious that the wonder is how intelligent minds ever attempted to use it, or believe it—much less to accuse others of disobeying a divine command, on the strength of it.

And yet, it is one of the main stays, of close communionism. It is astonishing to what illogical and unbiblical lengths prejudice and pre-conceived opinions sometimes lead a very excellent people. Obviously, there is no such "Divine Order" in these passages. It is a clear case of attempting to amend the Bible, and put in what the divine writers never put in it.

7. The "Relic of Popery" Argument.

Our close communion Baptist friends get not a little consolation in that pedobaptists, alike with them, believe baptism to be prerequisite to communion, and they trace the dogma clear back to Jerome and Justin Martyr. And then they shout, "See how everybody is against you! It is conceded on all hands that baptism is prerequisite to communion!" They have forgotten that a comparatively short time ago pedo-baptists said the same thing about immersion, and they answered that truth was never destroyed by the number not believing it—else the devil, having always thus far had a large majority, would be the especial champion of truth, instead of being the father of lies.

They have forgotten, also, how they showed that during the development of Popery in the western church, there was developed the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, that baptism was essential to salvation, Hence, as parents want their children saved, so they wanted them baptized in order that they might be saved; and, friends wanted their sick friends (clinics) saved, and they thought they could not be immersed so they begged for and received pouring, and eventually sprinkling as a substitute. In a like manner, as baptism was deemed essential to salvation, so naturally and necessarily it came also to be accepted as prerequisite to communion.

It is in this way that both the un-Biblical doctrine of pedo-baptism and the equally un-Biblical doctrine that baptism is prerequisite to communion grew up in the Roman Catholic church. And the one follows from and is a logical result of the other. They cannot be separated. If baptism is essential and pre-requisite to salvation, it must be also to the communion; and if baptism is not essential to salvation, neither is it to communion. The pernicious Papal doctrine of baptismal regeneration is the root and life of both of them; and we again beg leave to be more "baptistic" than our close communion Baptist friends, and so refuse to accept either of them. They reject the premise that baptism is essential to salvation, but most illogically accept the conclusion, that therefore it is essential to the communion. We, like them, reject the premise, and then consistently carry out the inevitable logic of also rejecting the conclusion. We will have neither. Both alike are relics of Popery. In this we occupy much the safer position.

They can, if they choose, continue to drive out their Pentecosts and Behrends and Dowlings in order to save their "relic of Popery," but we beg leave to be excused from thus following the "Mother of abominations." We prefer, if need be, to be in a minority, with truth and Christian fraternity on our side. But this Papal dogma cannot stand investigation, and like pedobaptism will eventually give way before a spiritual and biblical understanding of the gospel. Free communion baptists will not always be in a minority. The dogma that baptism is essential to regeneration having been given up by all protestants, they will all have eventually to give up also with it that which depends alone on it, the other equally unbiblical and illogical dogma of baptism as essential to communion.

It may also be added that pedo-baptists do not hold tenaciously to the necessary antecedence of baptism to communion. It has come to them as a sort of heirloom, along with some other rubbish, from the past. They have given no earnest thought to the subject, seldom or never preach it, and really put their readiness to commune with others on the same ground that we do—on the fact that they are Christians, have in themselves the vital fact symbolized in the ordinance.

8. The Landmark Argument.

A portion of the close communion Baptists, called Landmarkers, mostly in the South, not only deny "churchhood" to all other churches than their own, but deny, the validity of baptism, (immersion) administered by any one but themselves. Hence they deny the validity of not only immersion administered by pedobaptists, but also when administered by General, Freewill, or any other liberal Baptists, and so would re-baptize any one who would go from us to them. (A rather amusing illustration of this came out in a convention of Missionary and General Baptists at Boonville, Indiana, in 1881. See "Benoni Stinson and the General Baptists," p. 339.) They assert that baptism, to be valid, must not only be by immersion, but it must also be administered by a "legally, qualified administrator," that is, by one a member of a close Baptist church, who has also been both baptized and ordained by a "legally qualified (close Baptist) administrator" before him.

Obviously, this position assumes that there must be an unbroken chain of "legally qualified administrators," all the way back to the apostles. A break in one place is precisely as fatal as a break in any other place. Z might as well be baptized by an "illegally qualified administrator," as by one whose ministerial pedigree was all right all the way to O, or B, if so be that N, who baptized O, or A, who baptized B, was not a legally qualified administrator. Nothing can well be more clear than this.

Now, here is plainly another Relic of Popery. It is neither more nor less than the Papal doctrine of "Apostolic Succession"—that every minister must be ordained by somebody, who was ordained by somebody, who was ordained by somebody, and so on uninterruptedly and without a single break, until the first somebody was ordained by an apostle. The pasture is a Baptist one, but the animal undoubtedly belongs to the Papacy. :

And so, these strait laced, Landmark Baptists fish around among the musty and uncertain, and contradictory, records of the Anabaptists, the Munsterites, and especially the Waldenses and Albigenses, to find some trace of an uninterrupted succession back to the apostles. All protestants aver that the Papal chain back to Peter is altogether uncertain and unsatisfactory—that it is a case not made out. There evidently is not that certainty about it that there should be, if such fundamentally important things depend upon it. But, if this is to be said of the Papal argument, what must be said of this Landmark Baptist one! It is an hundred fold weaker than the Pope can make. And so, while we free communion Baptists, in common with all the rest of the protestant world, reject the Pope's argument, so, a hundred times more, we reject this shadowy, Landmark imitation of it.

But, this Landmark doctrine of succession not only unchurches and unbaptisms all Liberal Baptists, but it does the same to a large majority of even the Missionary Baptists. While some of the baptisms and ordinations of the American Baptists

came from English and other foreign Baptists—though it is by no means certain that there was no break farther back—yet the large majority of them came through the Roger Williams' channel, who was baptized by Ezekiel Holliman, who had not himself been immersed by any one—much less by one of these Landmark successors of the Apostles. (It is but just to say that some of the Landmarkers deny that northern Baptists baptisms came through Roger Williams. But the great mass of the Baptists represented in the American Baptist Publication Society admit it,—and defend it.) Consistent Landmarkism therefore can no more recognize the baptism and "churchhood" of these Missionary Baptists, than they can the baptisms (immersion) of free communion Baptists, or even those of the Pedo-baptists—to such straits do wild vagaries and one sided theories lead one.

The Landmark theory and argument are utterly at variance with all our ideas of the fraternity, the charity, the love of the gospel—utterly at variance with the predominance of the spiritual over the outward and formal in the Christian economy—utterly at variance with our understanding that it is the Divine Life within us, rather than the simple observance of forms and ceremonies, that fits us both for heaven, and also the church—utterly at variance with our conceptions that the way to heaven is over a road so plain that the fool need not err therein, instead of being a way so devious and blind that the wisest cannot feel sure of finding it, and none but a bigot can be confident he is in it—depending on a doctrine that can never absolutely be proved. We, certainly, have not so learned Christ.

Landmarkism is the "church syllogism" intensified. All that we said under that head also applies to this. It is the very essence of assumption, of bigotry, of arrogance, and of intolerance. It declares what God has not uttered, denies fellowship with the larger portion of God's elect, stifles the voice of the Divine Life in the soul, and builds up self-righteousness, exclusiveness, bigotry and strife. We will have none of it. Rather we will say of all God's people, in all denominations, "All we are brethren."

CHAPTER II. —OBJECTIONS TO CLOSE COMMUNION

1. It Is Non-Biblical.

We take the Bible as our rule of religious faith. If there were any close communion in that, we would accept it. But there is not. We have called, again and again, for even one single text in its favor. But we call in vain. There is none. The whole dependence of the close communionists is on inferences and far-fetched assumptions, without any attempt whatever to produce a "Thus saith the Lord!" We strenuously object to such a non-biblical dogma.

2. It Promotes Phariseeism.

Its tendency is to cause those who believe it somehow to feel that they are superior to other Christians—that they are God's favorite people—that they stand in a nearer and dearer relation to God than other Christians do—they may come to his table, while others, no matter how devoted and Christ-like, must stand aside, and have no business there. And so, generally without being conscious of it, they virtually come to exalt themselves, much like the Pharisee—"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men or even as" these poor publicans of the other denominations—ours are "churches," possessed of "churchhood," theirs are only "societies."

3. It Is Exclusive and Unfraternal

All Christians are children of God, and so are brethren. They, therefore, manifestly ought to treat each other as brethren and equals. But a close communionist cannot do that and preserve the spirit of his close communion. He must stand apart. He must refuse to unite and co-operate with others in good works. His work and worship must be by himself. He cannot commune with others. He cannot recognize them as churches—only "societies"—and so he cannot consistently recognize their ministry—for they have neither been ordained nor baptized in an "orderly," that is, a close Baptist way. And so they wrap their pharisaical close communion cloak around them, and stand apart, that may not "fellowship" the others' "errors" or be contaminated by their "disorderly walk."

4. If Not Unfraternal, It Is Inconsistent.

As a fact, most close communionists are more fraternal than their doctrine. In spite of its exclusiveness, many of them will unite with other ministers in union services, will preach and pray with them, exchange pulpits with them, compliment and encourage their "societies," as though they were churches, and together plead with sinners to be reconciled to God—and only fly off in an unfraternal tangent when the Lord's Table is spread.

But we submit that all this, creditable as it is to their Christian charity, is at the expense of their inconsistency. It is not in keeping with their close communion, but in antagonism to it. To be sure, their inconsistency is better than their consistency, but it is inconsistent, for all that. The hope is that they will eventually come to perceive it, and forsake it, and come to fraternize at the communion table as well as anywhere else.

5. It is a Stumbling Block to the World.

The world says:—"Here are a lot of people that profess to be all of one family, the children of the same father, and they profess, too, to be a very loving people. But they won't even eat together at the same table. How is this? We wordly people are seldom so bad as that, and when we are, we are mightily ashamed of it. We can't see that such an unfraternal religion can be of much use to us!" And so the world stumble over the opposition communion tables set among Christians. The Lord's Table can hardly be a representation of such a division as that. He prayed that his children might be one, even as he and his father are one.

6. It Is Out of Harmon With the Divine Life

When one comes into the possession of the Divine Life in the soul, there is begotten there a great love for 'the brethren,' for all Christians; and, the more one has of the divine experience, the more intense is his love for God's people. Now close communion is out of harmony with this spirit of loving fraternity; and so close Baptists always find a difficulty in indoctrinating converts into close communion—as they frequently admit, more trouble with it than with all other questions put together. They have the same difficulty with close communion that pedobaptists have with sprinkling and infant baptism. The fact of this lack of harmony between close communion and the Divine Life is unquestioned and unquestionable, and we prefer the free communion that is in such entire harmony with it.

7. It Is Out of Harmony With The Spirit of Heaven.

Christians of all ages, of all peoples, of all denominations, will have the closest fellowship and communion—no close communionism to get off into some corner to celebrate a communion, or anything else, exclusively by themselves. It seems to us that the more of that spirit we have on earth the better, and that anything out of harmony with it is exceeding undesirable, and cannot be a part of any divine arrangement.

CHAPTER III. —DIRECT ARGUMENT.

1. Christ's Command.

"Drink ye all of it!" said the Master, and one of the evangelists says—"They all drank of it." Those who thus partook of the commemorative Supper on that eventful night, were the representatives of the whole church for all time. Through them alone comes the injunction to observe the ordinance; and, the injunction that "all" who enjoy the same relation of disciples and "friends" should drink of it, is as binding on all subsequent disciples as the command that they observe the ordinance at all. The "all" is as imperative as the "drink ye!" And so the Master enjoins all who shall enjoy the priceless salvation he purchased by his broken body thus to "remember" him. Shall not we all drink of it, even as they did? They were not all equal in their appreciation of the gospel. They differed as widely in many things as do the different denominations now. Peter had afterward to be "converted," down at the house of Cornelius, to a principle of the gospel more fundamental than most of the points that separate evangelical Christians—that "of a truth, God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." He was also so deficient in devotion and steadfastness, that only a few hours after partaking he denied his Lord and engaged in cursing and swearing. "Likewise also said they all"—that is, all the disciples were weak enough to deny their Master. The loving John was also so "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had written," that he gave up his apostleship and discipleship and went back to his old trade of fishing, and the other old fishers went with him. Thomas was utterly lacking in faith in the resurrection—the central doctrine of Christianity, quite as important as "Apostolic Succession," the "Doctrine of Grace," or even the form of baptism. The rest of them were so completely demoralized and discouraged as to make absolutely no manifestation of trust, or even hope, in the Master. "We had hoped," said one of them, on the way to Emmaus, in his present despair, and he probably voiced the feeling of the whole of them. Altogether, they were a sorry set between the crucifixion and the day of pentecost. Good pedobaptists manifest more devotion to the Master and undoubtedly enjoy more of the divine life in the soul, and are filter communicants, than were they during this period.

And yet, these weak and "erring brethren," these faithless disciples, these "disorderly walkers," and dull of comprehension as to important principles and doctrines, had all rightfully partaken of the communion; for they had done it at the direct command of the Master himself. So, at the present time, as then, the weak ones, or those not fully or rightly understanding, or practising, all of the principles or doctrines of the gospel, yet being disciples, should partake of "The Lord's Supper."

Nor is the question of the apostles' baptism entirely settled. They had probably been baptized by John the Baptist, but even that cannot be proved. Then John's baptism, even if for the time a preparatory substitute, was not Christian baptism, both because Christ had not commenced his ministry when it was instituted, and because it lacked elements deemed by every one essential to Christian baptism, —It was not in the name of the Son or Holy Ghost, and it was baptism "unto repentance," and not "on a profession of faith in Christ." For these reasons, Paul rebaptized certain disciples at Ephesus, who had been baptized with John's baptism. Acts 19:5. For the same reason, any Christian minister would now rebaptize any one who had been baptized only in the way John baptized.

Obviously, if they had been baptized by John's baptism, it was not the baptism the Master instituted in the Great Commission. At most, it was but an imperfect preparatory substitute for it, lacking essential features. May not a substitute be accepted now, that lacks no more essential features? If we believed baptism essential to communion, we would as readily accept pedobaptist baptism, lacking only in form, as John's baptism, lacking the more essential feature of regenerating faith.

So, when the Lord's Table is spread, all the Lord's children, however weak and erring, if so be they are his children, though feeling their unworthiness like a load upon them, should hear the Master say, "Drink ye all of it!"—and obey.

2. It Is "The Lord's Supper."

The fact that it is "The Lord's Supper," and so "The Lord's Table," significantly settles the whole question. Child-ship carries with it the title to a place at the father's table. There can be no better title. Every child not disowned by the father has of right a place at the family table. Do they say pedobaptists are disowned, as children of God? They dare not say that—they do not say that. They admit they are children, "and, if children, then heirs." And can "children" and "heirs" rightfully be refused a place at the paternal table—and by those who are only fellow-children and fellow-heirs with themselves? Surely not.

We have indeed heard close Baptists say: —"If this were out table, we would gladly invite you to it, but it is the Lord's Table, and dare not do it!" But, if it is the Lord's Table, what right have you to drive any body away? Suppose you let the Lord take care of his own table? "Oh," they say, "the Lord has directed us to shut you out." But, where, when, by what words? Where is your authority? And they can only say: —"We admit that you are God's children, that he blesses and communes with you spiritually, just as richly and fully as he does us; we admit that he has nowhere directed us in so many words to turn you away; we admit also that he has nowhere said you shall not come to his table; but, as you do not understand one of his commands just as we do, or you 'fellowship' by communion with those who do not, we infer you have no business there, and that we are authorized to drive you away." What a wretched inference! — What a monstrous assumption.

And thus, without putting- it to their own thought in that light, they say it is God's Table, while they act that it is their own table. Or, if that be not it, then it is that they assume to mend, God's matter by their own wisdom. They assume that God

did not understand the matter, that he did not sufficiently provide for all the exigencies of his church. They practically say:—"To be sure, God knew that in process of time there would be a large number of unimmersed children of his; but he was careless about the matter, and left it in such unguarded shape—even commanding 'all' to partake of his supper—that unless we carefully fix up his fences for him, there will be danger that some of these other children, of his, that he seems to like and bless as much as he does us, will come too, and we shall not enjoy a monopoly of this Supper."

And so close communion assumes to amend and supplement God's Word with what He has not put into it. And this is the secret of their having so much trouble in indoctrinating their converts into close communion. On the question of baptism, they get along finely. They just open their Bibles and read. But on the communion question, they have, pedobaptist like, to resort to inferences and roundabout reasonings, from outside the plain Word of God.

And, then, notice the assumption in another, direction—that they are so much more loving and generous and kind than God, that they would like to commune with other Christians, if he would only let them—they would really like to do it, if they only dared to. Says the Examiner of Aug. 23, 1888, "The natural promptings of Christian sympathy would lead us to invite to it all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth. We would be glad to invite them, if we dared." Notice, too, how much more "sympathy" they have for God's children than he has himself. Their warm love would embrace them, were it not for his stern, unloving repulsion. In his cold presence, they do not dare to.

Again we ask, show us the "terms" God has made driving any of his children away from his table—and still we ask in vain. Before our demand for a plain, unequivocal voice of the Lord, our opponents are dumb. It seems to us it were better had they been dumb before they put forth what they cannot back up by the manifest Word of the Lord. Pardon us if we utter the thought of our heart, that close communion is an altogether unwarranted attempt to steady the Ark and Oracles of God.

When the prodigal returned, the father's door was not closed against him. He had forfeited the legal right. But the father's heart bade him welcome, and the father's arms joyfully embraced him. Tell us not, then, that our Father can turn a single one of his children from his table. That it is his table and that we are his children is in itself a surer passport for us to his table than that a father pitieth his children—so much does our heavenly Father's love transcend all human affection. Our Christian birthright is the sure pledge and assurance of our right and acceptance at our Father's board.

3. Universal Christian Consciousness.

The voice of the universal Christian Consciousness proves the propriety of Free Communion.

Every new-born convert longs for communion, both the inner and the outward, with every other Christian. It came to him with the in-breathing of the Divine Life in his soul. It grows and strengthens with his every step of advance in the spiritual life. The nearer he gets to the Master, the more he feels like communing with all the Master's children. And this Christian impulse is in every convert's heart. He may have been converted under close-communication influences, but it is there all the same. He may never have heard of free communion, but the longing for it has come to him and dominates him; and he cannot put it entirely from him. He may think it his duty to smother, and crush it out, but it will not be smothered or crushed out. Even after long years of believing and preaching close communion, like Dr. Bright, of the Examiner, still this Christian Consciousness within him asserts—"We should be glad to, if we dared."

And this Christian Consciousness, thus impelling to free communion, has asserted itself in every Christian heart, in all ages, in all climes, among all nations and tribes, under all circumstances. It has developed itself, and manifested itself, wherever there has been any Christian experience and life. And it has never deviated in its utterances. Its testimony has been uniform and unvarying. And, moreover, the more fully the Divine Life has developed, the more manifest and stronger also has been this development of the Christian Consciousness.

This consciousness, therefore, has thus far been inseparably connected with the universal Christian experience. It has commenced when that commenced. It has grown with its growth. It has never been crushed out or smothered, even by supposed logic or believed-to-be principles. It begins with the dawn of spiritual life in the individual soul, and goes with it to the end. It has manifested itself from the beginning of Christianity until now, in all nations and all the Christian ages. Nor can this universal Christian Conscience be invalidated without also invalidating the Christian and spiritual life with which it has been inseparably connected. If the one is a lie and a delusion, must not the other of necessity be also? As so much importance is being attached to Consciousness in mental philosophy, especially since the discussions of Hamilton, so more importance needs be attached to the same faculty in the realms of religion. If consciousness can decide questions of psychology and experience, beyond a question, in mental matters, can any one show it to be less authoritative and conclusive in religious matters?

That this universal Christian Consciousness craves-free communion among all God's children is as sure proof of its propriety as the universal cravings for food is proof of the propriety of eating for heaven by practicing here what will prevail there? Let us, as many and as often as we can, come together and together celebrate the great Memorial Supper of our common Lord, and compel the carping world to say—"See how these brethren love one another, and fraternize with one another?" instead of saying—"See how unloving and unfraternal they are!"

6. It Is the Communion Of Saints.

From this, as well as from all Bible teachings on the subject, it follows that the Communion is the "Communion of Saints, not the communion of a sect," "All who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth," as Dr. Bright confesses his Christian Consciousness would impel him to say, should sit down together as far as circumstances will permit, and together in holy fraternity and love, commemorate the suffering and sacrifice for them of their common Lord. What a beautiful and impressive sight? How it exalts the encompassing power of gospel grace. How insignificantly it declares to a carping world—"See how, in spite of our differences, we are all loving brethren still."

